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LETTER 10

TO THE REVEREND 1490. c 97

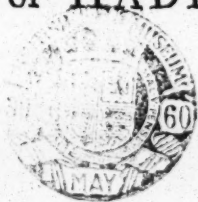
The MODERATOR,

AND

MEMBERS

OF THE

Presbytery of HADDINGTON.



Matth. xviii. 17.—*Tell it unto the church.*

Col. iv. 17. *And say unto Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord.*—

Isaiah lviii. 1. *Cry aloud and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, shew my people their transgressions.*—

EDINBURGH:

Printed in the Year M,DCC,LVH.

UNTO the faithful ministers of the church of Scotland, be it known, that the disorders in churchmen are now come to the greatest height. What by error in doctrine, what by error and neglect in discipline, and what by the light, vain, indecent, and disorderly practices and conversations of her ministers and managers, in delity and profanity grows and increases so fast, that it threatens to overrun all: it hath now audaciously gathered head, and openly brow-beats and bears down the very form of religion. Now when they find so great a party among the clergy countenance and protect the authors of the vilest infidel-books ever was printed, infidels apprehending they have so many of the clergy that favour their principles, and their number so increasing, are emboldned to proceed still in composing and printing books in favour of Infidelity.

Now the reverend Mr George Anderson is dead, who valiantly appeared for the cause of his God and his Saviour; yet he was suffered to stand alone, to the reproach of Edinburgh.

Indeed the presbytery of Edinburgh took the process he commenced against the author and publishers of Hume's moral essays into their own hands; but dismissed it at an after meeting, by only remarking it contained many unguarded expressions and exceptional passages, which might be dangerous to some good people. In the debate some there were who approved the book, yet some condemned it as heretical. Mess. W--st--r & L---say dissented, so it is open to the synod. It was generally said, the author appeared to have no bad intention; yet many think the intention appears to be, to teach the wicked how to take a short cut with a condemning conscience — But David Home is not afraid nor ashamed to own his Infidelity; how far it is your duty, and the interest of this Christian church, to permit him, and other professed Infidels, to enjoy a right to the privileges of Christians, do you determine.

By the judicious, matters appear to be near some remarkable crisis. If you thus supinely sit still regardless, and do not rouse up to some effectual endeavours, many will suffer whose blood will be required at your hand. If you are afraid or ashamed to own the cause of God according to your profession, God will raise up instruments to do his pleasure. If you be not ashamed, you have nothing to fear; you have the laws of God and man on your side, which not only permit, but command you. Oh that those cool sedate easy men, who love to slumber, and care not to disturb their own repose, could be roused up to put to their hand when they see their enemies so active to undermine them; or take some moderate method of their own, agreeable to the polite world, that may be effectual to suppress vice, and bring about reformation, and not appear yet more void of zeal than passions.

Esther iv. 14. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there deliverance arise to the church from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed. Isaiah lvi. 10. Ezek. xx. 30. Zeph. iii. 18. Amos 6. and Mic. iii. throughout.

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LETTER, &c.

EDINBURGH for eight or ten days hath been filled with the clamour, that Mr John Home in Athelstane-ford, one of your number, has composed and sold the tragedy of Douglas, in order to be acted in the play-house of the Canongate at Edinburgh, and which play hath accordingly been acted there, to the offence and scandal of all who have any regard to religion. And so impious hath he been, that out of zeal to promote the interest of Satan, he sent out a considerable number of tickets to one or more of his own elders, to be distributed among his parishioners, in order to seduce them to come in and see the play, which they did accordingly. And he himself was witness several times to the acting of the play; as were also several other ministers, of whom some came from a considerable distance. But how consistent this is with the profession and character of a minister of Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine and spirit of Christianity, let all real Christians judge.

And as the acting of all plays exhibites scenes of vanity, lewdness and impiety, so this tragedy of his is, in a special manner, horridly wicked. It is wholly made up of intrigue, revenge, bloodshed and self-murder, intermixed with strange

oaths, and blasphemous speeches against God, which filled many of the spectators with horror and abhorrence at the profanation of sacred things; and the most solemn act of religious worship towards God is profaned in an open stage, before the crowd, by one of the most abandoned of all characters, exhibited praying: and in the play he sets forth, not for caution, but rather for example, the cursed principles and doctrine of his intimate acquaintance and beloved friend, David Home the Infidel, concerning the warrantableness of self-murder.

Have players been banished both by Pagans and Papists; and shall ministers of the church of Scotland be allowed to support and furnish materials for them wherewith to serve the devil in seducing souls? are not those who furnish them materials first and most criminally guilty? yea, are not they as Beelzebub to the inferior devils, who furnish materials, and set such vile creatures a-work to seduce and destroy souls?

He is a strange kind of bishop who employs play-actors for his curates; however, the doctrines, curates and bishop, appear to be all of a piece. We see, by the growth of Infidelity, the fatal effects of thus permitting David and John Homes to go on after the manner they do without being censured. John Home's is such audacious and impudent wickedness, that it is only paralleled by Zimri's, Numb. xxv. 10. and just so timed as his was, who, when the congregation were weeping before the Lord, under the immediate effects of the just vengeance of God for that particular sin, brings out his whore in the sight of the congregation; even so hath he done, and prostituted religion to sinful diversion
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by such abandoned creatures. Shall none of our priests be found like Phinehas, who was zealous for his God and for his people, and turned away the wrath of God, so as the plague was stayed?

It is now said to you, who is on the Lord's side? Exod. xxxii. 26. Consider what is said, Deut. xxxiii. 9. of the sons of Levi, how they gathered themselves to Moses, and regarded not parents or brethren in the cause of God.— It is now said to you, who will rise up for me against the workers of iniquity? Psal. xciv. 16. who will stand up for me against the evil doers?

Do you not see the pernicious effects of your complying with the way of the world, and of your supine carelessness and negligence? hath not God said to the sons of Eli, 1 Sam. ii. 30. "They that honour me, I will honour, but they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed?" Is it not so at this day? Mal. ii. 9. "Therefore I have made you contemptible and base before all people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law." How have ministers made themselves contemptible by acting so much below and unsuitable to their character, in ministring to and attending the play-house? Edinburgh, for several days, was filled with deriding contemptuous speeches and conversation in all companies concerning them: what wanton, ludicrous papers have been sold and handed about, to their reproach? One would think, tho' there were nothing of the Spirit of God to stir up, the spirit of men of honour would stir them up, and not suffer their reputation and profession to be so reproached, stained and polluted.

Let it not be said of the church of Scotland, that she harbours and protects such enemies to

the gospel, and allows the ministers of the play-house, to fill her pulpits, and enjoy her benefices. Do you think such can serve the interest of Christ? is Satan's kingdom divided? will Satan cast out Satan? or should one be allowed to partake of the table of the Lord and the table of devils, by harbouring such as they? do not the profane say, You are all alike, and think you approve his conduct? "Purge out therefore the old leaven;" and let it be seen the whole lump is not yet leavened, 1 Cor. v. 7. I hope you do not want number so much, had you spirit and zeal. While you enjoy your benefices, will you appear to be like Gallio, Acts xviii 17. caring for none of those things? Let it be seen we have yet some ministers who dare to appear zealously for the glory of God, the interests of Christ, and credit of religion. You must either depose and cast out John Home and his adherents, or be cast off yourselves. What tender Christian can cordially join with them who adhere to and join themselves with him as a brother? surely none that would show due regard to the glory of God, and the benefit of their own souls, can do it.

Deposition is as much the ordinance of Christ as ordination, excommunication as baptism. Though there was no particular church act against ministers composing or attending plays, seeing it could hardly be supposed any would be so openly profane, you have enough to lay to John Home's charge, for which he deserves not only to be deposed, but excommunicated. Neither can you sufficiently exoner yourselves without doing it. I have heard there was a process commenced against Mr Home before his

his presbytery, with difficulty begun, and shamefully deserted : and it is long since it was said, that if he could find bread any other way, he wanted to demit. Now that he hath joined himself with another kind of society, let them have him altogether, seeing it suits his genius and disposition so well : but by no means ought a dimission to be received from him ; he ought to be solemnly cast out.

Wherefore, out of obedience to Christ, and love to the offender, put away from among yourselves that wicked person ; deliver him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord, 1 Cor. v. 5.

Ah the church of Scotland, once the glory of the Protestant churches for the purity of her doctrine and discipline, now become a reproach to Christianity ; while she permits the profane and erroneous, yea Infidels, to bear office in her, and casts out such as faithfully and stedfastly adhere to her doctrine and discipline ! those who in times past would have been excommunicate the congregation, are permitted to serve in the sanctuary and at the altar !

According to the advertiser a solemn farce should have concluded the play, called the Address, and the five principal characters in their true colours. But it came out to be only five lords of session and barons of exchequer exhibiting their regard to the act of parliament prohibiting the play-house ; and several of John Home's fellow-presbyters, brethren in iniquity, exhibiting themselves in their true colours.

But we may venture to assure the public, that though the house of Baal was for six or seven nights filled from end to end, scarce ever any of
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the true worshippers of God could be found in it.

The church can be at no loss in wanting such ministers, however agreeable to those of their own kidney in their facetious way, allowing and taking all freedoms; whose gifts are only to soothe the simple, and stir up the angry passions of the judicious; whose cloke is so thin and ragged they seldom wear it, nor even carry it to the pulpit. I am, &c.

IT is certain that the stage is the device of Pagans, instigated by the devil whom they worshipped. Is it rational to suppose the devil intended the exposing of vice to ridicule, or virtue for imitation? or dare any say that the stage ever had that effect? or can it be denied but that it hath been the chief means of introducing all kind of impiety, lewdness, effeminacy and debauchery? hath not the ruin of empires and cities been attributed to the stage by many learned and judicious writers? is not the dismal state of Britain at this day chiefly to be attributed to the stage, which hath introduced such manner of living, that our statesmen and chief officers in army & navy are so effeminate and unmannered, counsel, conduct and courage withdrawn, and also the whole nation overrun with licentiousness both in church and state, so that we are become a reproach to Christianity and derision to our enemies?—How evident is it, that since the stage got footing in Edinburgh, infidelity, contempt of religion, and all manner of lasciviousness, profanity and debauchery, hath increased still more and more, to the ruin of many families and once hopeful youths? and its baneful influence is spread through the whole nation.——God hath long warned us by his word, now he cries by his providence. Britain appears near some remarkable crisis: sword and famine threaten us. Edinburgh sinks under the burden of guilt and expence incurred by the stage.—If judges and magistrates, in obedience to God and the king, will not now suppress, but rather countenance and protect that fountain of our sin and misery, let them answer it to God and posterity.—But let ministers be faithful to those for whom they must be accountable, and not be afraid or ashamed in plain words to warn and exhort all against the stage, and publickly debar from the Lord's table all such as approve themselves in their partaking of the table of devils, which joining in the play-house doth evidently infer. Then shall ministers be so far kept from accession to the sins of others, and that just ground of offence be removed, 1 Cor. x. 20, 21.



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